AU/ACSC/03-1514R/2003-04

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

THE CLASH OF CULTURES

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

April 2003

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
APR 2003		**00-00-2003 to 00-00-2003**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
The Clash of Cultures	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **Air Command and Staff College,Air University,Maxwell AFB,AL**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			
unclassified	**unclassified**	**unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**35**	

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Contents

Tables

Page

Preface

As an exchange officer with the Italian Air Force for two years, I was thrust into my own personal clash of cultures. This is one of the experiences that slowly made me realize how little U.S. forces really know about other cultures. It took me one full year before I could successfully eat a meal in the Officers' Club with the Italian officers without making a cultural mistake. I am indebted to the members of the 50th Gruppo located at Pisa, Italy for their understanding and patience in teaching me about their beautiful culture.

My second major cultural experience comes from my wife, Rosa. She was born in Panama and continues to teach me an immense amount about what it means to view the actions of other countries through cultural lenses and the mistakes we often make. I beg her forgiveness for the mistakes I have yet to make and thank her for the wonderful support she has always given me.

I would also like to thank my faculty research advisor, Dr. Don MacCuish, for his insights and the discussions that led to this paper.

Abstract

The history of U.S. military operations is replete with examples of major errors made due to cultural misunderstandings. This paper examines three such cases from Korea to Kosovo to explore the implications of past failings to understand culture. The reason these failings are relevant today is seen in one vision of the future described by Samuel P. Huntington in his seminal work, *The Clash of Civilizations.* This work examines the rising importance of civilizational blocks and the increased value culture is having in the affairs of states and non-state actors. By examining this work in particular, we see the dangerous parallel trends of a military that has difficulty understanding culture and the rising importance of culture in conflict.

This paper suggests three courses of action in order to better organize, train, and equip U.S. forces for future conflicts: (1) redraw the AOR's for the regional commands with a more distinct cultural focus, (2) increase the cultural awareness of the entire force through expanded training opportunities, and (3) equip squadron-level units with cultural experts to provide continuing cultural focus.

Chapter 1

Know the Enemy

He who knows the enemy and himself will never in a hundred battles be at risk;

He who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes win and sometimes lose;

He who knows neither the enemy nor himself will be at risk in every battle.

—Sun-Tzu[1]

Knowing the enemy in battle is of supreme importance. The quote by Sun-Tzu is deceptively simple, yet tremendously difficult to put into practice. This paper is an attempt to briefly analyze the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and Kosovo through a cultural lens. None of these conflicts is deemed an unqualified success and much of this can be attributed to a fundamental lack of understanding of the enemy. These conflicts do not represent an exhaustive list of U.S. cultural failures, but they do present a good cross-section of culture in conflict. Accepting the weakness in understanding our enemies is crucial due to the possible future of conflict outlined by Samuel P. Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations.* The clash between U.S. failure to understand enemy cultures and the rise of culture as a basis for conflict is the volatile brew this paper will address. Organizing, training, and equipping will be the framework this paper uses for recommendations concerning this problem. The focus of this paper and the recommendations are on improving the cultural awareness in the USAF, but the ideas are certainly applicable to all the services.

Korea

No one can fully understand the Korean War who does not own at least an elemental knowledge of the geography, the history, the climate, and the economic lot of that country

—General Matthew B. Ridgeway[2]

The Korean War represents the first 20th century conflict, short of total war, the United States faced with a non-European culture. The war has also been represented as, *Korea: The First* War *We Lost.*[3] The Korean War represents the departure from Euro-centric conflict which was culturally much closer to the United States. The Korean culture is extremely rich and can be dated back thousands of years. The connection of Korea to China is also worthy of study and vitally important for understanding the decision of China to come to the aid of North Korea in 1950.

The origins of the Korean War can be traced back to negotiations during and following World War II. In Cairo in 1943, China, Britain, and the United States produced the Cairo Declaration that laid out their intentions for the future of Korea as such, "The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."[4] The meaning of "in due course" was not clearly defined, so Koreans were able to hope for a future Korean nation. In August 1945, the same "three great powers" reaffirmed the intent of the Cairo Declaration at the Potsdam Conference. It was not long, however, before the coming of the Cold War began to wreak havoc on the peninsula.

Viewing the Korean War through a cultural lens, two grave errors were made by the United States. First the United States failed to appreciate the desire for unification and failed to understand the implications if such unification was attempted by force. The U.S. was still

searching for a viable policy regarding Korea when on 12 January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson made a speech before the National Press Club. Acheson defined an American "defensive perimeter" that ran from Alaska to the Philippines, but did not include Korea.[5] While he later tried to clarify his statements, the damage was done and it was obvious that American efforts were being focused elsewhere. This "green light" was all the North Koreans needed to finally convince their Soviet suppliers to turn a blind eye to the invasion.[6]

The conduct of the war itself is beyond the scope of this paper, but the second cultural error made during the war is important. With the U.N. forces marching towards the Yalu River after Macarthur's brilliant landing at Inchon, the Chinese and Soviets faced a decision. The Soviets were loathe to face the Americans head-on in battle over North Korea, and hesitated to help. The Chinese, however, were much more willing for a number of reasons. Culturally there was a close bond between the Chinese and Korean peoples. The Koreans had even come to the aid of the Chinese Communists in their fight against the forces of Chaing Kai-Shek, so Mao owed something of a "blood debt" to the Korean people. The Chinese were also fearful of an American presence so close to their manufacturing base in Manchuria if the Americans were allowed to remain at the Yalu River. The U.S. fundamentally failed to understand the culture connection in the Chinese-Korean relationship with disastrous consequences.

The USAF was certainly not immune to the cultural misunderstandings either. The USAF, having gained independence only three years before the start of the Korean War, spent the interwar years focused almost solely on delivery of nuclear weapons. In the budgetary battles that occurred during the severe post-war drawdown, Air Force leadership saw salvation in the nuclear arena. The trouble was that when war broke out on the Korean peninsula, nuclear weapons were not to be used, and instead the long-neglected counterland functions of

interdiction and close air support would need to be revived. The strategic bombing campaign also drifted during the war often in search of something, anything to bomb.

Five weeks after the North Korean invasion south of the 38th parallel, B-29's began the strategic bombing campaign in the north. Targets were clearly more important than effects and General Stratemeyer, head of FEAF Bomber Command, concluded that practically all strategic industrial targets were destroyed by September of 1950.[7] The Chinese intervention in the coming months would turn the big bombers to the task of interdiction again before the end of the year. As the conflict drug on, the USAF was still looking for a way to bring the might of the bombers to bear on the populace and finally found a suitable target right under their noses.

Early in 1953 in an effort to bring the Chinese and North Koreans to the table for talks, General Clark finally accepted General Weyland's proposal to bomb the irrigation dams. Twenty of these dams were found and none had been attacked during the war. In May of 1953, three of the dams were struck and General Clark remarked that the attacks were "as effective as three weeks of railroad interdiction."[8] Instead of trying to destroy just bridges or switching facilities, wide swaths of the rail lines were simply washed away, greatly complicating the repair effort. What General Clark failed to grasp was the effect the destruction had on the North Korean food supply. FEAF intelligence eventually concluded that breaching all of the dams would destroy an entire year's rice crop. Both North Korea and China could see that the U.S. was taking the conflict to another level even without the use of nuclear weapons.

The war in Korea was just the first of many very painful cultural lessons for the U.S. in Southeast Asia. In Korea the U.S. mistakenly learned that supposed Communist aggression could be stopped with force while failing to understand the fundamental cultural underpinnings

of the conflict. The U.S. would apply the mistaken lessons of the Korean War to another very different culture and stumble through more painful lessons in Vietnam.

Vietnam

> *In Vietnam, the Air Force along with the other services was rarely outfought, but like the other services it was often outthought.*
>
> —Earl H. Tilford, jr.[9]

The trauma caused by the "loss" in the war against Vietnam has been studied intensely for the past thirty years. Theories abound as to the causes for the failure, but one thread runs through nearly all the explanations—misunderstanding. The United States began its experience in Vietnam just as the Korean War was winding down in 1953 and would find twenty years later that limited wars could be very costly.

The actual history of Vietnam runs like the same painful history played over and over again. The early independent peoples of Vietnam came into being approximately 1000 years ago.[10] These early Vietnamese were fiercely independent, but were forced to pay tribute to China to avoid invasion. This would set the stage for a thousand-year struggle against foreign powers. The Mongols attempted to subjugate the area 1285, but were expelled after the population was mobilized and guerilla tactics were applied.[11] The foundations of the Vietnamese struggle were already in place; fierce independence, mobilized populations, and guerilla tactics.

The French experience in Vietnam is especially illustrative of how an industrial power planned to bring a colonial entity to heel. Although French missionaries had been active since 1615, organized resistance to French colonial rule began in 1858 when the Vietnamese emperors banned Christianity.[12] The French initially landed troops in the north of the country but were contained by the fierce resistance. French forces moved to the south where they applied superior

mobility using ships on inland waterways and defeated the interior fortresses of the Vietnamese. The ensuing famine caused by the blockade on rice forced the Vietnamese to again subjugate themselves to a foreign power. They would chafe under French colonialism until the end of World War II when a weakened France and a defeated Japan left Vietnam independent for a short time. It was during World War II that leaders in Vietnam first recognized an opportunity to achieve independence. Ho Chi Minh, as the leader of the newly founded IndoChinese Communist Party, called on his countrymen in 1941 to "unite and unify our action to overthrow the Japanese and the French."[13] The immediate post-war period would also mark the increasing involvement of the United States in Vietnam.

In the first official U.S. government response to Vietnam's declaration of independence from French rule, Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated that the "US has no thought of opposing the reestablishment of French control of Indochina."[14] Only two weeks later, the first major diplomatic effort by Ho Chi Minh was a letter to President Truman pleading for assistance in Vietnam's effort for independence. The letter was never answered indicating that the U.S. was clearly not yet willing to become involved in Vietnam.[15] With no U.S. interference, the French quickly moved to reestablish control of Vietnam. French superiority in firepower, however, was met with the usual tactics of the Vietnamese; small-units, booby traps, hit-and-run attacks, and ambushes. The initiative clearly lay with the Vietnamese who could fight at the time and place of their choosing.[16] French forces in the north were completely defeated by 1954 and the French relinquished control north of the 17th parallel at the Geneva Conference. The now independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam set about to reunite the entire country of Vietnam and rid themselves of Chinese, Japanese, and French colonialism once and for all.

The entry of the United States into the conflict in Vietnam must be viewed in light of the spread of communism so feared in the U.S. at that time. Some claim that Vietnam never was communist in the generally accepted definition of the term and the Vietnamese use of the term carried far different implications than that of the Soviets.[17] Stopping the spread of communism was clearly the reason the U.S. entered the war in Vietnam, but it is also clearly one of the major mistaken assumptions of the war. In his reflections on war, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara cited the number one mistake the U.S. made:

> We misjudged then—as we have since—the geopolitical intentions of our adversaries (in this case, North Vietnam and the Vietcong, supported by China and the Soviet Union), and we exaggerated the dangers to the United States of their actions.[18]

The U.S. government obviously did not understand the culture, history, and people of Vietnam and their continuing struggle for independence. The struggle should not have been that foreign to the U.S. since, less than 200 years earlier, it fought its own war for independence against a European colonial oppressor. Ho Chi Minh even quoted the U.S. Declaration of Independence during his speech declaring Vietnam independent after World War II.[19] This misunderstanding of the intentions of North Vietnam also led the USAF to stumble in how it implemented airpower in the ensuing war.

In spite of the lessons learned in Korea regarding the value of interdiction and close air support, strategic bombing still lay at the heart of USAF doctrine during the Vietnam War. The USAF plan for practically any war was to lay waste to the enemy's industrial centers and therefore destroy their ability to wage war. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Curtis LeMay, wrote simply that in Vietnam his "solution to the problem would be to tell them frankly that they've got to draw in their horns and stop their aggression, or we're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age."[20] Politics and a largely, non-industrial enemy quickly revealed the

flaws in this limited doctrinal package. The Air Force, in response, presented a list of 94 targets to the Secretary of Defense on 24 August 1964 which emphasized gaining air superiority first, then limiting North Vietnam's access to outside help and interdicting the flow of supplies to the south. This target set was to be implemented in a long and drawn out campaign that would never produce the paralysis the planners intended. During Rolling Thunder, the primary emphasis remained the destruction of the listed targets in gradually more intensive attacks.[21] The bombing campaign failed to produce any meaningful results since the North Vietnamese were given ample opportunity to react to the attacks and only ended with the initiation of Operation Linebacker in April 1972.

In the final result the experience in Vietnam left a grave wound on the collective psyche of both the civilian and military populations in the U.S. The USAF saw the success of the final bombing campaign as proof that had similar attacks been accomplished earlier, the war would have taken a completely different turn. The cultural context of the war was and still is largely misunderstood and the lessons learned incomplete. The success of the air campaign in Desert Storm in 1991 would lead to the attempt to "win" a war using airpower as the only weapon in Kosovo.

Kosovo

Then come to the Kosovo meadow, and we shall do division with our swords.

Serbian Epic Poem[22]

With the end of the Cold War, the United States was faced with not one primary defense focus, but a myriad of smaller crises. One such crisis that still occupies U.S. forces is the Balkans. Yugoslavia quickly descended into open warfare between the various republics that were previously held together by Tito. The violence and resort to ethnic cleansing by all sides in

the conflict left the U.S. casting about for a suitable foreign policy. The Serbian ruler Slobodon Milosevic was adamant that any division of Yugoslavia that "would separate parts of the Serbian people and put them within separate sovereign states cannot be acceptable."[23] Croatian strength and intervention in Operation Deliberate Force would eventually force Milosevic to accept a division of the former Yugoslavia, but the issue of Kosovo still smoldered.

Tracing the root of the importance of Kosovo to the Serbs can go back as far as 28 June 1389. Lazar, a minor Serbian noble, decided to stand and fight the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Kosovo. The Serbs were defeated on the battlefield that day and Lazar was also killed. Thus the importance of Kosovo to the Serbian people was planted in the seeds of a great defeat on the field of battle. To commemorate the 600th anniversary of the battle, Milosevic returned to the battlefield on 28 June 1989 and spoke to a crowd of nearly a million people. Serbian nationalism was firmly reawakened and remained deeply rooted to Kosovo. Rising unrest in Kosovo would remain masked by the overall disintegration of Yugoslavia and the atrocities that captured world attention.

One of the primary causes for the rising unrest in Kosovo can be traced to the changing demographics of the region. The dramatic fall in the percentage representation of the Serbs in Kosovo is revealed in Table 1. The Serbian population in Kosovo was shrinking both relatively and absolutely due to outmigration of Serbs and the high birthrate of the Kosovar Albanians. The seeds of a possible war were now sown with extreme Serbian nationalism facing an increasingly rebellious Kosovar Albanian population. By 1998 with the rest of the former Yugoslavia under a relatively stable peace, experts were openly wondering whether the issue of Kosovo liberation would end peacefully or in a conflict "more deadly than that which was created in Bosnia."[24]

Table 1. Serbian Population in Kosovo

	Total Population	Serb Population	Share of Serb Population (%)
1948	728,436	171,911	23.6
1953	804,530	189,869	23.6
1961	966,026	227,016	23.5
1971	1,247,344	228,264	18.3
1981	1,585,333	209,498	13.2
1991	1,961,515	194,190	9.9

Source: Marina Blagojevic, "Kosovo In/visible Civil War" in Thano Veremis and Evangelos Kofos, *Kosovo: Avoiding Another Balkan War*, ELIAMEP, University of Athens, 1998.

The road to war in Kosovo followed a nearly textbook example of guerilla insurgency and government reprisals. The guerilla army in Kosovo, the KLA, began to intensify their attacks throughout 1998 and these attacks were met with severe Serbian reprisals. The KLA strategy was to get the attention of world leaders thereby provoking intervention on their behalf. U.S. intelligence even warned that the "KLA acted deliberately to provoke harsh Serbian reprisals" and force Western intervention.[25] Both sides in the conflict were eventually brought to the table to discuss a peaceful outcome, but diplomacy never had a chance due to severe cultural misunderstandings.

The U.S. position entering the Rambouillet Conference already colored any attempts at diplomacy. Prior to the Rambouillet Conference Secretary of State, Madelaine Albright, outlined the type of diplomacy that would take place by stating that if Milosevic did not cooperate he "could expect NATO air strikes."[26] The success of Operation Deliberate Force in Bosnia after only 12 days of limited attacks left the impression that Milosevic was easily persuaded by just dropping a few bombs. NATO leaders hoped to find a solution to stop another round of ethnic cleansing and finally put the Balkan problem to rest. The Serbians continued to claim that the matter was internal to their country and the proposed agreements impinged upon

their sovereignty. Proposals such as "unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] including associated airspace and territorial waters" for NATO personnel gave the Serbian delegation reason to pause. Failing to understand the importance of Kosovo to Milosevic and the Serbian people eliminated any chance for peace and finally led NATO to war.

The expectation of a short war was evident throughout NATO and made the decision to go to war that much easier. Expecting limited damage and only a few days of airstrikes, leaders of NATO countries, including the U.S., could advocate and sell the war to their home audiences. Secretary Albright stated on national television the night the bombing started, "I don't see this as a long-term operation. I think this is...achievable in a relatively short period of time."[27] Words aside, the preparations for war clearly indicated that even the military expected a short war. No operational plan for a ground war in Kosovo was ever prepared. The United States did not have an aircraft carrier within range of Serbia when the war began, and there were fewer aircraft available than there had been in October of 1998.[28] Even the JFACC, Lt. Gen. Michael Short, stated that, "We expected to bomb for about three days."[29] After 78 days of bombing, a huge military buildup, and a humanitarian crisis, U.S. officials were left wondering what had gone wrong, but publicly stating, as Secretary Albright did, "We never expected this to be over quickly."[30]

The U.S. misunderstood the cultural context of Kosovo and reacted poorly both diplomatically and militarily. Perhaps we will never know exactly what Milosevic was thinking or why he reacted the way he did to the bombing in Kosovo and Serbia, but failing to prepare for possible contingencies and basing a single course of action upon false assumptions was a mistake. The interaction of the U.S. with other countries and cultures is extremely complex and admittedly difficult to understand with complete comprehension. Attempting to understand the

fundamental nature of the other person you are talking to is vital though. The review of three conflicts the U.S. had less than perfect success with shows that each was based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the culture and history of the enemy. As a superpower in a once bipolar world, the U.S. could in the past afford to make mistakes and recover through the use of overwhelming force. The future may not provide such easy answers for the U.S. and the increased importance of culture in the future as a basis for conflict makes it even more imperative that the U.S. begin to know the enemy.

Notes

[1] Sun Tzu, *The Art of Warfare,* translated by Roger Ames (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 113.

[2] Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway,, *The Korean War,* New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967, 1.

[3] Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost,* New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986, Title Page.

[4] Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the United Nations,* New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956, 214.

[5] Alexander, 18.

[6] Kathryn Weathersby, "Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives", Washington D.C. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No 8., 1993, 26.

[7] Bernard C. Nalty, *Winged Sword, Winged Shield, A History of the United States Air Force, Volume II, 1950-1997*, Washington D.C.: USAF History and Museums Program, 1997, 14.

[8] Ibid., 48.

[9] Earl H. Tilford, *SETUP: What the Air Force Did in Vietnam and Why,* Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1991, 287.

[10] Mark W. McLeod, and Nguyen Thi Dieu, *Culture and Customs of Vietnam,* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001, 16.

[11] Ibid., 17.

[12] Ibid., 26.

[13] Gareth Porter, *Vietnam, A History in Documents,* New York: New American Library, 1982, 2.

[14] Ibid., 38.

[15] Ibid., 38.

[16] McLeod, 32.

[17] Douglas Pike, "Vietnamese Communism: Understanding the Enemy" in *The Real Lessons of the Vietnam War,* edited by John N. Moore and Robert F. Turner, Durham N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2002, 64.

[18] Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect,* New York: Random House, 1995, 321.

[19] Porter, 28.

[20] Gen Curtis E. Lemay with MacKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965, 565.

[21] Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power,* New York: The Free Press, 1989, 205-206.

[22] Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge,* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, 4.

[23] Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1995, 197.

[24] Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History,* New York: New York University Press, 1998, 355.

[25] Christopher Layne, "Miscalculations and Blunders" in *NATO's Empty Victory,* edited by Ted Carpenter, Washington D.C.: Cato Institute, 2000, 14.

[26] Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2000, 77.

[27] Ibid., 91.

Notes

[28] Ibid., 96.
[29] Need to get the tape of his presentation to ACSC.
[30] Layne, 11.

Chapter 2

The Coming Clash

In the emerging world of ethnic conflict and civilizational clash, Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers three problems: it is false, it is immoral, and it is dangerous.

—Samuel P. Huntington[1]

Following the end of World War II there was great hope in the world for a new order in which war would not be as prevalent. Wilson's dream of a League of Nations was finally realized with the founding of the United Nations. The question of what the "New World Order" would look like was addressed in 1947 by George F. Kennan when he wrote what many consider to be the most influential article ever published in *Foreign Affairs.* Writing under the pseudonym "X", Kennan wrote of the coming clash between Western powers and the Soviet Union and the need for containment as a policy to thwart the expansionist designs of the communists. With the fall of the Berlin Wall nearly fifty years later, the same question of a new order was on the minds of politicians and the public. Perhaps fifty years from now we will look to Samuel P. Huntington as the "X" of the present "New World Order."

In the summer of 1993, *Foreign Affairs* published an article entitled, "The Clash of Civilizations" by Huntington. The response was immediate and the article stirred more debate than any article since that of Kennan. Why did this one piece on the possible clash of world civilizations cause such a stir? Perhaps Huntington touched a raw nerve by expressing an idea

that most were unwilling or afraid to express out loud. It is important to understand exactly what Huntington was outlining as a possible future for the world due to the importance culture and civilizations may have in the future. The events of September 11 reopened the debate over a civilizational clash, especially between Islam and the West, and the raw nerve was found to be even more sensitive than in 1993. If there is to be a clash of civilizations, the U.S. is poorly prepared based on our past failings to understand other civilizations and cultures.

The central theme of Huntington's article and subsequent book "is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilizational identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world."[2] He further expands on this central theme with five corollaries. This chapter will examine the central theme and the five corollaries along with their critiques to better understand the clash of civilizations.

Understanding exactly what civilizations are is central to understanding the conflicts that arise between them. The American Heritage Dictionary defines civilization as "an advanced stage of development in the arts and sciences accompanied by corresponding social, political, and cultural complexity." Experts in the field almost always define civilization using the word culture as a base such as "a space, a 'cultural area'" or a "concatenation of worldview, customs, structures, and culture" or "a particular original process of cultural creativity."[3] The major civilizations of the world have also been largely associated with the major religions. Using the idea that civilizations are the broadest cultural identity, Huntington finds that there are presently eight civilizations in the world; Sinic (China), Japanese, Hindu (India), Islamic, Western, Orthodox (Russia), Latin American, and possibly African. Huntington finds the African civilization to be growing in strength but possibly not at the stage of a distinct civilization.

The interactions between civilizations can be traced through three distinct phases. Before 1500 A.D., the interactions were either limited or intermittent but intense. The limited ability to travel and geographic separation limited the ability of civilizations to remain in contact. With the rise of Western civilization beginning around the 7th or 8th century A.D., the interactions entered the second phase. Initially Western civilization was behind that of both the Sinic and Islamic civilizations in terms of technology, art, and literature.[4] From 1500 A.D. to 1900 A.D., however, Western civilization began to grow in influence and came to dominate the world. Revolutions in technology and industry allowed the West to dramatically alter their mode of making war and were thus able to overcome other civilizations' resistance to subjugation or colonization. With the arrival of the 20th century the international system entered the third phase of interaction.

The 20th century signaled the change from a world dominated by the "unidirectional impact of one civilization," the Western, to multidirectional interaction between and among all civilizations.[5] Many factors contributed to this change in civilizational interaction such as global communication, trade, and travel. Non-Western civilizations began to possess not only the will to rebel against Western domination but also the means. Different civilizations also took different approaches to the question of how to deal with Western influence and modernization, both separate issues. Those in the rejectionist camp accepted neither Western influence or modernization as requirements for their civilizations. Some chose to embrace both, while reformist chose to modernize while eschewing Westernization. The ending of unidirectional influence from the West also heralded the arrival of a much more complex international system which became multi-civilizational.

Another way to view the interactions between civilizations is through their conflicts. Perhaps no statement was more controversial in Huntington's original article in *Foreign Affairs* than the statement that borders of the Islamic civilization were bloody. Huntington classified conflict *between* civilizations as fault line wars. These wars occur along the dividing lines between the major civilizations and are usually characterized by a struggle for territory or for peoples. What makes fault line wars different from other communal wars is that since these wars are fought between different civilizations they are almost always between different religions. Religion is only one aspect of culture, but it is without a doubt one of the most important. Fault line wars are also different from communal wars since they are fought between groups with larger cultural identities. These conflicts, then, have the capacity to spread much more easily than wars that do not involve differing cultures.

There is no doubt that there are a number of different civilizations in the world today. These civilizations differ on the basis of language, religion, culture, history, and a myriad of other factors. These civilizations also come into conflict with one another and the conflicts have been increasing in frequency and violence. The question is what the future holds for these civilizations and their interactions? Civilizations do die out as evidenced by the disappearance of the Mesopotamian, Cretan, Byzantine, and the Roman Empire to name a few. The declining influence of the West over the past century can be seen as a temporary decline in relative power or the natural course of events in human history. Has the West reached its zenith as a culture and if so what can be done to remain there or slow the decline? Huntington offers eight specific actions that the West must take to preserve Western civilization in the face of declining Western power.

The recommendations Huntington proposes do not adequately address the need to understand the unique cultures of other civilizations. In short, he proposes reinforcing the fortress of Western civilization by increasing ties between the U.S., Europe, and Latin America. Militarily he proposes to maintain the technological edge currently enjoyed and retard as much as possible the efforts of other civilizations to increase their strength. Finally, the West should drive wedges between civilizations such as the Sinic and Japanese so that they do not increase their power by joining forces. These recommendations, however, do little to address the fundamental causes of the conflicts along the fault lines, and the inevitability of the coming clash is where many begin to take issue with Huntington's thesis.

There are many critiques of the idea of a clash of civilizations and many can simply be traced to a fundamental difference in worldviews. Realists see the interactions between nations as a zero-sum game with states seeking to maintain a balance of power that favors their interests. Liberalist political thought does not see the interactions between states as zero-sum, and instead holds out hope that as mankind grows and learns war is not inevitable. These are simplistic summations of complex political science ideologies, but they do a great deal to explain the differences between those who agree with Huntington and those who do not. What all seem to agree on is that states are increasingly losing their monopoly on control of world politics to sub-state, regional, religious, and other entities. It is increasingly clear that "large cultural units, not states, are becoming the new actors" in the realm of international politics.[6] The many critiques are not as important as the agreement that culture is a rising force that must be reckoned with if the West, and more specifically the U.S., is to retain power and influence in the world.

Notes

[1] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations,* New York: Touchstone, 1996, 310.
[2] Ibid., 20.
[3] Ibid., 41.
[4] Ibid., 50.
[5] Ibid., 53.
[6] Felix Marti, "Clash of Civilizations or Interculural Dialogue?" Downloaded from Hhttp://www.glotaleduc.org/clashof.htmH on 18 July 2002.

Chapter 3

Recommendations

A deep understanding of the cultural, political, military, and economic characteristics of a region must be established and maintained. Developing this understanding is dependent upon shared training and education, especially with key partners, and may require organizational change as well.

—Joint Vision 2020[1]

The parallel trends of cultural misunderstandings and the rising importance of culture highlight the importance of improving the ability of the U.S. military to become more culturally adept. In order to accomplish this, three fundamental and important changes should be implemented. First, the regional AOR's should be realigned to more closely reflect civilizational boundaries. Second, all U.S. forces should be trained on the model of Special Forces which focus regionally and work on cross-cultural skills. Finally, squadron-level units should be equipped with regional or cultural experts such as Foreign Area Officers to implement the training required to become culturally intelligent and aware.

Organize

The current AOR's for the regional combatant commands are not drawn with respect to culture or along civilizational boundaries and force combatant commanders to focus on several different cultures. The only command with a singular cultural focus is SOUTHCOM which can focus exclusively on the Latin American culture. In contrast, EUCOM must focus on Islamic,

Orthodox, and the Western cultures of Europe. PACOM has responsibility to watch the Japanese, Sinic, and Hindu cultures. Given the historical difficulties outlined previously in this paper, can these commands truly expect to understand and shape multiple diverse cultures at the same time?

The solution to the problem is a realignment of the combatant command AOR's. The most pressing problem, in terms of national security, is to establish CENTCOM as the primary command for Islamic culture. Our recent conflicts in Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and even Somalia, have all been conflicts with the Islamic culture and point out the need to fully understand this culture. The anti-Islamic violence displayed in the United States immediately after the attacks of September 11 also illustrate a high level of cultural misunderstanding on the home front. The AOR for CENTCOM should stretch from northern Africa to Indonesia incorporating the majority of Islamic nations. It would also include India and the Hindu culture. The other regional commands would have their cultural responsibility similarly focused.

Aligning CENTCOM to focus on the Islamic culture would allow PACOM to focus entirely on the Japanese and Sinic cultures. EUCOM would focus on the Orthodox culture of Russia and her "near-abroad." Intra-cultural conflicts arising between nations in a single AOR would be better understood by a regional command focusing exclusively on that culture. Those conflicts between cultures would allow two different regional commands to present the diverse cultural aspects represented in the conflict. It is beyond the scope of this project to establish the actual AOR's which would fulfill this proposal. What is important is to recognize the need and utility in establishing a cultural focus for the realignment of the AOR's.

Train

Organizing the combatant commands along cultural lines would provide a consistent cultural focus, but it is the individuals in the Armed Forces who will, in the end, mark the success or failure of increased efforts at cultural awareness. One example of forces accomplishing cultural training is found in the Special Operations Forces (SOF). "Selected SOF are regionally oriented for employment; cross-cultural communications skills are a routine part of their training," according to Joint Pub 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*.[2] By maintaining a regional focus and training consistently within their region of specialty, SOF are able to develop and maintain an in-depth, long-term cultural understanding. Many cultures also value long-term relationships more deeply than Western cultures and these can only be established by maintaining interaction within the region during peacetime. SOF, however, are not the only elements within the U.S. military attempting to increase their cultural awareness.

The U.S. Army has a well-developed program to train Foreign Area Officers (FAO's) and marks specific officers early in their careers for a regional specialty. "FAO's combine professional military skills with regional expertise, language competency, and politico-military awareness."[3] The Army recognizes the critical need to establish regional experts and start their training early to allow them to develop a robust awareness of the cultural environment found in their region. The reduction in overseas basing opportunities also means the FAO's provide a critical level of information once available just outside the overseas post. Cultural good will is a fleeting commodity easily lost or destroyed as evidenced by recent experience in Afghanistan. Diverse elements of SOF were in Afghanistan for months developing contacts and creating an environment of trust with the local populations. The arrival of the 82nd Airborne had an immediate and adverse effect on that trust, however. Members of the 82nd, trained for more

conventional warfare, conducted operations without much heed for local customs and villagers were often terrified of them.[4] SOF operating in Afghanistan estimated "that the behavior of the 82nd may have set back counterinsurgency and intelligence operations by about six months."[5] Clearly training the FAO is not the only answer, but the USAF is developing FAO's in a manner close to that of the Army.

The CORONA Conference held in 1996 mandated that 10% of the USAF officer corps have proficiency in a language by 2005. The Air Force was beginning the transition to the expeditionary concept and realized that cultural awareness was going to be key to success when operating in foreign countries. The Air Force began to slowly increase the training opportunities for learning languages and even adopted a version of the Army FAO program. By July 2002, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. John Jumper, stated "our expeditionary forces must have sufficient capability and depth in foreign area expertise and language skills..."[6] Training FAO's, however, is not enough for the entire force and many training opportunities are currently squandered or not appreciated.

The expeditionary concept ensures the continued deployment of a large portion of the U.S. Air Force. While deployed, these forces should take part in organized cultural activities to, as a minimum, learn about the culture, history, and people of the host nation. Even if the host nation is a Western culture, such as Germany or Italy, the experience of learning about one culture greatly increases cultural awareness and appreciation of other cultures. The U.S. Air Force is currently focused on increasing the language skills of the FAO's, but what is still lacking is an integrated program for capitalizing on the training and experience of the FAO's to increase cultural awareness at all levels.

Equip

Training the force, as a whole, can only be done by continually focusing on the importance of cultural training and providing a means to accomplish this. The U.S. Air Force is currently training a cadre of FAO's, but has no plan for their integration into the force. When a Weapons Officer graduates from Weapons School, they are quickly utilized at the squadron level to impart their experience and to maintain a continued focus on the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures. This concept should be used as a model for integrating culture into the daily training regimen at the squadron level.

Equipping squadron-level units with a FAO would both utilize the training the FAO's receive and provide valuable cultural awareness training to all squadron members. This would apply to all units, not just flying units, since the expeditionary concept applies to an ever-increasing portion of the total force. This step would bring focus to the FAO program and give meaning and purpose to the 16XX AFSC that FAO's currently carry.

These three recommendations carry the importance of cultural awareness from the individual/tactical level of war to the regional command/strategic level of war. The U.S. Air Force, as a force provider, would present forces to the regional commanders that were culturally trained and aware. The regional commands would be allowed to focus on fewer cultures and tailor their plans and operations accordingly. These recommendations are by no means the sure road to cultural nirvana, but recognizing the importance of culture now and beginning to train for it would produce a military much less likely to repeat past cultural mistakes.

This paper has briefly examined three conflicts that were less than successful due to severe cultural misunderstandings. In the Korean War, the U.S. fundamentally failed to understand the connection between China and Korea. In Vietnam, the U.S. misunderstood the connection

between Vietnam, China, and the Soviet Union, and therefore placed far too much importance on the spread of communism to Vietnam. Failing to learn the lessons from these two wars, the U.S. again failed to understand the cultural foundation of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and expected a simple three-day war in Kosovo. Understanding culture is certainly difficult and can only be attempted after intense, continuing study of peoples and regions. The U.S. must begin to recognize and appreciate other cultures and admit a fundamental lack of understanding in most cases. To counter this lack of knowledge, this paper argues for a realignment of the geographic AOR's, expanded training opportunities to develop cultural experts, and the utilization of these experts to embellish the entire force with increased cultural awareness and understanding. This will not be an easy task, but it is vitally important if U.S. forces hope to shape the security environment and have success when war must be fought.

Notes

[1] Joint Vision 2020, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000, 17.

[2] Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations,* 17 April 1998.

[3] "United States Army Foreign Area Officer Program," on-line, 10 March 2003, available from Hhttps://www.fao.army.milH.

[4] Sofia Aldape, "The US Military Campaign in Afghanistan: The Year in Review," on-line, Internet, 10 October 2002, available from http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/site-index.cfm.

[5] Ibid, np.

[6] "FAO Briefing," on-line, Internet, 10 March 2002, available from Hhttps://fao.hq.af.mil/authorized/fao/briefing/brief.pptH

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